

REMARKS

REVIEW

The original application set forth claims 1-21, of which 1, 5, 12, and 16 were independent claims. After a preliminary amendment in which claims 1-11 were cancelled, the current application sets forth claims 12-21, of which claims 12 and 16 are independent claims. Presently, claims 12-15 have been indicated as allowed in view of the prior art. Claims 16-19 stand collectively rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(b) as being unpatentable over Mitchell (U.S. Patent No. 4,059,849) in view of Jones (U.S. Patent No. 4,652,977). Claims 20 and 21 stand collectively rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(b) as being unpatentable over Mitchell as modified by Jones and further in view of Inoue (U.S. Patent No. 4,789,776).

35 U.S.C. § 103(b) REJECTIONS

It is respectfully submitted that the present 35 U.S.C. § 103(b) rejections of claims 16-21 are moot in light of the above amendments. As indicated in the Office Action mailed 11 August 2004, certain aspects of the present invention as specified and claimed in claim 12 have now been incorporated into claim 16. Such claim is now believed to be in condition for allowance. As claims 17-21 further define and narrow claim 16, they are also believed to be in condition for allowance. Withdrawal of the current ground of rejection and acknowledgement of the allowability of the present claims is earnestly solicited.

CITED RELEVANT PRIOR ART

It is not believed that any of the prior art cited either by the Examiner or the Applicants, alone or in combination either with each other or other cited prior art, teaches, discloses, suggests, or makes obvious the claimed features of the present invention.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and comments, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the current grounds of rejection and the issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at his convenience should only minor issues remain after consideration of this amendment in order to permit early resolution of the same.

Respectfully submitted,

1/3/05
Date

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